



Jungle Telegraph

Newsletter from the Wildlife and Nature Protection Society

Wild Kids go star gazing



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A message from the President

It is with honour and pride that I thank the membership for re-electing me as President. It is an honour to lead such an organization, with pride in the knowledge that, as we believe, we are on the right path, with science leading the way. I would like to thank all the outgoing Committee Members for the services rendered to the Society and wish all of you the very best of luck. For those elected to the Committee for 2023-24, our work is cut out. We need to guide the Society through all the trials and tribulations presented to us as the country looks to recover from the worst financial disaster in our history. We can now boast of having four Professors on our General Committee reinforcing our commitment to science as the way

forward. However, having scientific knowledge alone is not enough. We need to have Administrators, Financial and Marketing Specialists, Managerial skills, PR & Communication Specialists, and ground level “Doers” to achieve the objectives of the Society.

This year, we are strengthening the new Climate Change Sub-Committee that will look to work with most of the Sub-Committee whilst trying to achieve its own objectives that they will make for the year. We did try getting this committee off the ground before but could not push through with the work that was required, for good reason. The challenge for all Sub-Committee Chairs would be to achieve their objectives for the year; by establishing how we do them, what we need to do and how we go about achieving them.

We, as a committee, would certainly look to increase 'our reach' to more international partnerships for work on critical conservation matters in our country. More importantly, we would like to engage with the GOSL to work on

critical environmental and wildlife policies to try and ensure our species get the highest priority for their conservation. However, this is easier said than done.

We would like the membership to engage a lot more with the Society. There are various options for doing so; field trips, joining a sub-committee, volunteering to help at an event organized by a Sub-Committees (World Elephant Day – Aug 12 or SL Leopard Day – Aug 1). So please reach out and get involved. We want more of our membership to be inclusive rather than just paying their membership dues for the year. If you have any ideas on how we can better involve you, please write to Rangika on rangika.perera@wnpssl.org. We will do our best to comply, within reason.

We thank you for your continued support and look forward to fulfilling the Society's objectives in this financial year.

Jehan CanagaRetna
President – WNPS

Have you missed our 129th Annual Report?



Relying on partnerships and collaborations from across the world, the Society successfully obtained the highest-ever funding recorded in its history. These vital contributions enabled the WNPS to make incredible strides in the conservation of vulnerable ecosystems and species while engaging with diverse communities across the island and renowned scientific experts, in order to preserve our future.

This annual report outlines the progress made during an exceptionally tumultuous year.

Read on and find out more.
[Click Here](#)

Astro Night: A Stargazing Adventure for our Young Nature lovers

The Night Sky Observation Camp, organized by the Wild Kids of WNPS in collaboration with the Astronomical Society of the University of Colombo, provided an unforgettable experience for its participants. With over 100 attendees, the event aimed to inspire a love for the broader natural world and for astronomy, among the Wild Kids members. Conducted by the Astronomical Society of the University of Colombo, the camp featured informative sessions, hands-on demonstrations, and an opportunity to observe the wonders of the night sky.

The program utilized advanced telescopes, including the state-of-the-art Zhumell Z12 Deluxe Dobsonian Telescope (12") and Celestron Nexstar 130SLT optical tube and tripod. These sophisticated instruments allowed participants to explore celestial wonders with great precision and clarity.



[READ MORE](#)

Investing in our Youth;

More schools, more programs; more eco-conscious children

The past three months were quite busy yet enjoyable for the Youth Wing, with more programs in schools in different parts of the country. Collaborating with the Human- Elephant Coexistence (HEC) subcommittee of the WNPS and the Lanka Environment Fund (LEF), Youth Wing conducted 28 school programs in Anuradhapura, Hambantota, Ampara and Monaragala districts, reaching more than 3000 children. These programs shed light on the importance of elephants as ecosystem engineers, the economic and cultural value of the species and why we need to find ways to coexist with these animals. The programs were conducted in areas which were identified as key localities pressurized by the Human Elephant Conflict (HEC).



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CYOB

Are you still going shopping **AWW?**

You know **Atha Wana Wana** without an eco-friendly **reusable bag** in hand?

CYOB

Carry Your Own Bag

One less plastic bag.

#CYOB #Srilanka



Sri Lanka uses an average of 20 million polythene bags a DAY! This single-use plastic is devastating to the environment and our natural world. The bulk of the plastic we use ends up in landfills. From here, much of it washes into our waterways, rivers, and oceans, choking native wildlife and polluting their habitats.

Our wildlife suffers due to our love affair with single-use plastic. Thousands of ocean creatures have perished after suffocating in plastic bags or getting snagged and choked by plastic fishing nets. Statistics suggest that plastic production has nearly quadrupled since the 1990s. Currently, more than 150 million tons of plastic waste are floating in our oceans

On World Environment Day, under the United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP) theme this year, “BEAT PLASTIC POLLUTION”, WNPS took pride in introducing “CYOB”, which stands for “Carry Your Own Bag”. The WNPS urges everyone to CYOB and help in creating a lower plastic footprint in Sri Lanka with an eco-friendly reusable replacement.

From a practical standpoint, we are unable to eliminate plastic from our lives, but we can reduce it by making a conscious effort in our daily routine. We can start with reducing the use of polythene bags. If every citizen does their part to limit consumption of disposable plastic, we can start to reverse the plastic problem. This will help us clean up our beautiful country for future generations to enjoy!

WNPS
eco-friendly
reusable bags
available.

To be available for purchase at the WNPS Monthly Lecture on 15th June.

Rs. 800/-

One less plastic bag.

#CYOB #Srilanka



Carry Your Own Bag.

Missed a lecture?



THE SLOTH BEAR IN SRI LANKA
Ecology, Conservation, and Human Dimensions

Dr. Shyamala Ratnayake

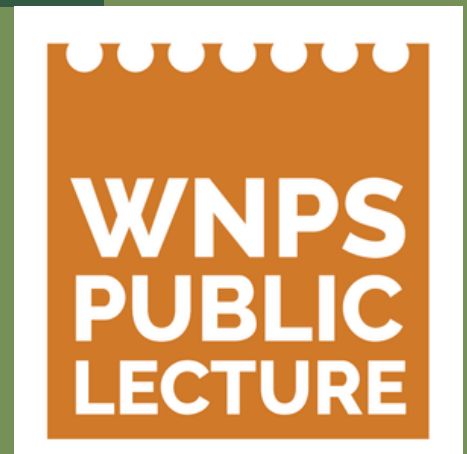
20th July
6.00 PM
Jasmine Hall
BMICH

Not to worry, we have you covered! Our lectures are now available online.

wnpssl.org/events/lectures/

Have you Read our Latest Loris & Warana

Click the covers to read our latest issues



Some Good News!

In response to a previous statement made by Hon. Minister Mahinda Amaraweera stating that there were plans being made to export toque macaque monkeys from Sri Lanka to China, 30 petitioners led by the Wildlife and Nature Protection Society of Sri Lanka filed action before the Court of Appeal seeking Writ of Certiorari, quashing any decision to export toque macaque monkeys from Sri Lanka to China.

When this matter was taken up on 26th of June, the honourable Attorney General appeared and stated in open court that they have received instructions from the Department of Wildlife and Conservation that they will not be taking steps to export monkeys to China. The case will be taken up before the Court of Appeal on 6th July to record the above undertaking given to the Court by the State.



We see this to be a significant achievement in the advancement of wildlife conservation.

President's Counsel Sanjeeva Jayawardena with counsels Prashanthi Mahindaratne, Dilumi De Alwis, Lakmini Warusevitane and Rukshan Senadira instructed by attorney-at-law Amila Kumar appeared for the Petitioners.

MADURU OYA NATIONAL PARK

An unexplored gem of a wilderness



The WNPS field trip to Maduru Oya was a tremendous success, thanks to the expert direction of Mr. Ashan Wijetillake, one of our skilled resource persons. Birding enthusiasts were certainly kept entertained. Spotting the Brown-Capped Pygmy Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos nanus*), the tiniest of our woodpecker species, was one of the special treats during this field trip. It is a rare breeding resident and is typically seen in couples; its small size makes it difficult to recognize, but its metallic rattle-like sound makes it easier to identify.



This field trip provided numerous possibilities of bird watching to its participants. The abundance of resident, migratory, endemic, and endangered bird species visible during this trip, easily surpassed the participants' expectations. Members were able to witness over 82 different bird species and an Elephant Comb, also known as "Ali Panawa". According to our Wildlife Guide, elephants use it to scratch their bodies.

The combination of smooth transportation, good lodging and a knowledgeable field guide makes up for a memorable excursion into the wild. The destination of our next field trip will be Wasgamuwa. Please call Jayathri on 074 100 8490 to reserve your seat.

PLANT keeps gathering momentum



Talking with media around the importance of our big initiative recently, our Chair of PLANT and former President Sriyan de Silva Wijeyeratne made a callout to the Corporate Community to increase their engagement in proactive conservation work.

Working on the ethos of 'preservation is better than reforestation', because Sri Lanka has a treasure trove of ecosystems to preserve. "We're all about creating corridors; it's about connecting already protected spaces so animals have much broader ranges for movement," he says. PLANT has picked Emerald Trails off the southwest part of Sri Lanka as one of these corridor spaces. "90% of the country's endemic species thrive in this area, and it is also the region where there is rapid development and expanding human habitat. Corridors, therefore, are critical."

PLANT badly needs more Corporate partners to support its ambitious plan of linking protected forests through these corridors. Chair of the WNPS PLANT outlines the concept in a chat with Savithri, on Kaleidoscope and more.

YouTube <https://youtu.be/JR8xRphIRzs>

[Sri Lanka pioneers PLANT – Preserving Land & Nature – to go beyond species conservation to ecosystem conservation - Commonwealth Union](#)

SPA Ceylon joins our reforestation efforts with a focus on fruiting plants



WNPS PLANT has partnered with Sri Lanka's very own Luxury Ayurveda chain Spa Ceylon to reforest 1000 native trees and other fruiting plants in our properties in Udawalawe, Matugama, Belihuloya, Bolgoda and Deniyaya.

Through the project, PLANT will reforest these regions with native fruit plants that suit local ecosystems and monitor and supervise the onsite progress of tree growth for two years, ensuring sustainability in our work.

These regions are home to some of Sri Lanka's iconic plant and animal species, and through our work at PLANT, we aim to protect, conserve and expand these ecosystems for the future.

PLANT takes pride in private sector-led initiatives like this and hopes to rebuild our local ecosystems with partners like @spaceylonofficial, who continue to support our endeavors in protecting Sri Lanka's rich biodiversity. Our work on building forest corridors through PLANT can be seen at www.plantsl.org.



Humans and Elephants – from Conflict to Cohabitation through awareness

The HEC subcommittee of the society, partnered by the Lanka Environment Fund, had a busy few months, raising awareness on HEC and mitigation strategies. The team worked with the Youth Wing to run 30 school programmes in the Hambanthota, Gal Oya and the Anuradhapura areas, educating school children on why HEC incidents take place and introducing them to potential mitigation strategies. The team also released 5 short documentaries on the WNPS YouTube channel focusing on the subject.



Seasonal Fencing



Maintaining Fences



Elephant Corridors



Linear Fences



Village fencing

In conjunction with the school programme, a PR campaign was also run on social media in English, Sinhalese and Tamil, that provides a brief overview on how HEC issues came about, why current mitigation strategies don't seem to be effective and also introduces a few alternatives.

[READ MORE](#)

Conservation of Critically Endangered Endemic Species Project

Sri Lanka boasts of a unique biodiversity that is a result of its isolation, topography, and climate. Despite its proximity to the mainland, high levels of endemism make it one of the world's most remarkable places. However, human activity poses a significant threat to this biodiversity, putting it at risk of extinction. To combat this, WNPS and HEMAS Holdings have partnered to launch a project aimed at preserving 52 critically endangered Sri Lankan endemic species over five years. These species will be selected based on the IUCN red list.

The project's initial stages began in September of last year and involved sorting critically endangered and endemic species from published IUCN Red Data books and the IUCN Global Red List. The final list includes 413 critically endangered plant and animal species that are endemic to Sri Lanka. The list of the species was added to the WNPS website along with proposal guidelines.

(link to the website - [Click here](#))



Proposals were called for projects to work on these species in two stages, with five species being considered at a time.

We have received proposals from universities, research institutions, NGOs, and individual researchers, and have selected 10 projects that align with our objectives.

The legal authority to manage the conservation and protection of these species lies with the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC). As these species are critically endangered, their population sizes need to be increased through conservation efforts. In this regard, proposed projects aiming to adopt artificial propagation techniques for these species must obtain permission from DWC. To obtain this permission, initial meetings have been held with DWC to request authorization to conduct these projects. Following these discussions, DWC has proposed that the projects dealing with plants be implemented with the help of the National Botanical Gardens, while those focused on animals should be carried out with the National Zoological Gardens.

This marks a significant milestone in Sri Lanka, as no organization has undertaken such a comprehensive array of conservation projects for critically endangered endemic species before. The following species have been selected for implementation in the first phase of the project.

Scientific name	Common name	Project location
<i>Stemonoporus moonii</i> (Plant)	Hora wel	Walawewatte- Wathurana
<i>Kyaya stylosa</i> (Plant)	Suwanda	Walawewatte- Wathurana
<i>Systemus asoka</i> (Fish)	Asoka barb	Kelani river in Kitulgala & Sitawaka river in Deraniyagala
<i>Poecilotheria smithi</i> (Spider)	Kandy Parachute Spider	Knuckles Range
<i>Arhopala ormistoni</i> (Butterfly)	Omiston's oakblue	Wathurana, Kalutara District
<i>Aneuretus simoni</i> (Ant)	Sri Lankan relict ant	Lenagala and Meethirigala Forest Reserves
<i>Impatiens subcordata</i> (Plant)		Central highlands
<i>Cryptocoryne walker</i> (Plant)	Water Trumpet	Badulu Oya catchment area
<i>Aponogeton jacobsenii</i> (Plant)		Horton Plains National Park, Pattipola, Ambewela, Hakgala/Seethata eliya, Kande-ella and Ohiya area
<i>Vanilla moonii</i> (Plant)		Dombagaskanda FR

Habitat Approach to Conservation of Endemic Orchid Species of Sri Lanka

the soil, perhaps to take advantage of ground-dwelling creatures such as white ants as their pollinator, as well as their seed distributor. In Sri Lanka, 6 orchid zones have been identified. Among them, the montane orchid zone and the lowland wet forest orchid zone occupy an array of habitats.

We printed 20 posters on flex material, and these will be distributed for display at the offices of relevant wildlife parks and forest reserves. We have contacted both the Department of Wildlife Conservation and the Department of Forest Conservation and as at now handed over 10 posters to the Department of Forest Conservation.

Family: Orchidaceae

Brief description of the species depicted in the Lowland rainforest habitat poster

- 1. Anacostichia regalis**
A monostichal plant with a fleshy rhizome and fleshy leaves, growing among mosses and ferns in a well-draining substrate on the forest floor with limited sunlight. The flowers are a vibrant magenta color that has adapted to absorb green light in the spectrum.
- 2. Eriosema virens**
A plant with long, slender stems and roots that cling to slightly moist surfaces. It is found in the tips of branches or exposed tree trunks where it can receive ample sunlight. The plant thrives in areas with high humidity, such as moss forests or bogs with saturated forest floors in the wet evergreen lowland rain forests of Sabaragamuwa, Sri Lanka.
- 3. Subtophyllum gossypinum**
A small, upright plant with a single stem and a single leaf. It is found in the tips of branches or exposed tree trunks where it can receive ample sunlight. The plant thrives in areas with high humidity, such as moss forests or bogs with saturated forest floors in the wet evergreen lowland rain forests of Sabaragamuwa, Sri Lanka.
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- 7. Melastichia thalictroides**
A plant with a single stem and a single leaf. It is found in the tips of branches or exposed tree trunks where it can receive ample sunlight. The plant thrives in areas with high humidity, such as moss forests or bogs with saturated forest floors in the wet evergreen lowland rain forests of Sabaragamuwa, Sri Lanka.
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Habitat approach to conservation of endemic orchid species of Sri Lanka: Montane habitat.

Family: Orchidaceae

Brief description of the species depicted in the Montane habitat poster

- 1. Anacostichia regalis**
A monostichal plant with a fleshy rhizome and fleshy leaves, growing among mosses and ferns in a well-draining substrate on the forest floor with limited sunlight. The flowers are a vibrant magenta color that has adapted to absorb green light in the spectrum.
- 2. Eriosema virens**
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The orchid family has distributed itself to almost every terrestrial biome except the polar region. Due to this complexity, orchids have a high level of species diversity of around 28,000 to 30,000 species throughout the world. Orchids have very complex lifecycles. Most of these species depend on other life forms to complete a certain stage of their life cycle. For the pollination of their flowers, many orchids depend on attracting an extremely species-specific pollinator by providing food or through deception. Similarly, in some orchids seed germination is helped by a species-specific mycorrhizal fungal association. Some orchids have taken such relationships to extreme levels. Few have saprophytic lifestyles, with one entire genus even chosen known to flower just a few millimeters under

the soil, perhaps to take advantage of ground-dwelling creatures such as white ants as their pollinator, as well as their seed distributor. In Sri Lanka, 6 orchid zones have been identified. Among them, the montane orchid zone and the lowland wet forest orchid zone occupy an array of habitats.

We printed 20 posters on flex material, and these will be distributed for display at the offices of relevant wildlife parks and forest reserves. We have contacted both the Department of Wildlife Conservation and the Department of Forest Conservation and as at now handed over 10 posters to the Department of Forest Conservation.

News from our Green Isle

Research activities at Green Isle in Attidiya continued through the work done by undergraduate Dinali Hansi from the Department of Plant Sciences, University of Colombo. Her research topic is 'A study on the vegetation and environmental parameters of selected urban wetlands in the Colombo district' in 2022/2023'. During the study, various water and soil parameters which were important to describe the quality of the urban wetland were analyzed in addition to soil nutrient and carbon stock analysis. Dinali's research work was supervised by Dr. Iroja Caldera.



Prof Dimuthu Wijeyaratne and students reading for BSc Honors in Environmental Conservation degree programme from University of Kelaniya visited the wetland restoration site as a part of their academic study.



The access to the site has become a challenge and future activities have been temporarily stalled. Well-wishers and nature lovers are invited to arrange visits and donate wetland plants to the project.

A Directory of Marine Protected Areas in Sri Lanka

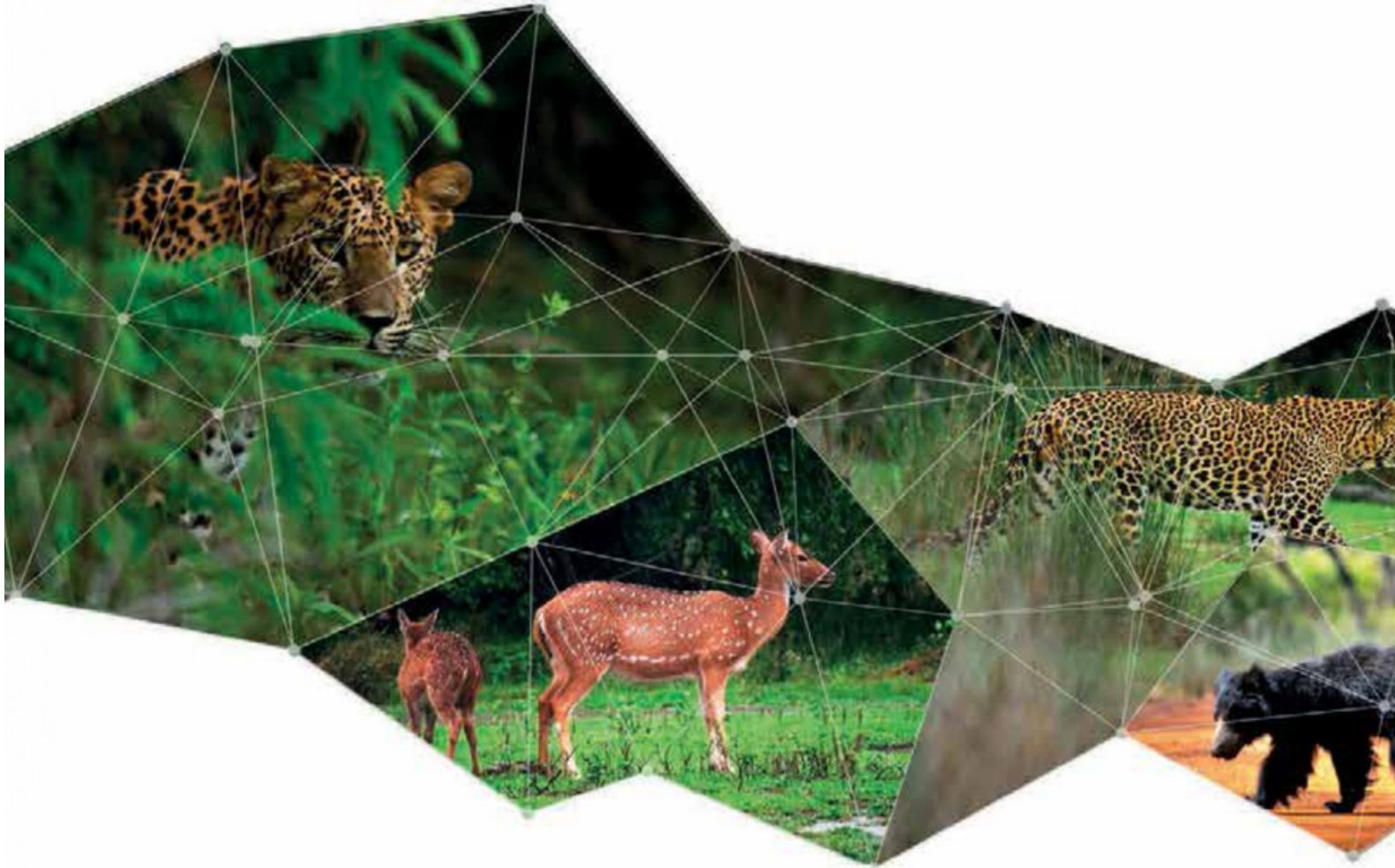
The WNPS Marine committee noticed an obstacle in obtaining information regarding Marine Protected Areas in Sri Lanka (MPAs). The reason being that Protected Areas (PAs) have been declared in Sri Lanka under various pieces of legislation, including the Fauna & Flora Protection Ordinance (FFPO), the Forest Ordinance, the Fisheries Act, the National Environmental Act, and the Coast Conservation Act and some other pieces of legislation.



As it is vital to be able to access this information for conservation of these areas, a team from the Marine Committee led by Dr. Malik Fernando, set out on the arduous task of gathering information from numerous published papers, articles, and reports, mostly from the internet. Defining a Marine Protected Area needed careful consideration. They decided to include under this title; truly marine PAs, terrestrial PAs with protection extending into adjacent coasts and sea, terrestrial areas with coastal lagoons and wetlands, islands surrounded by sea, and protected beaches (turtle nesting sites). These MPAs include Marine National Parks, Marine Nature Reserves, Marine Sanctuaries, and Protected Areas with Marine components—a total of 29 entities.

The team hopes to get more information about the current status of these MPAs, and add them to the Directory in the years that follow. We are grateful to Dr. Malik and the team for their dedication in compiling this vital Directory that can now be accessed for Marine Protection and Conservation information and projects and we are planning to publish more information on our WNPS website in the near future.

Empowering Positive Biodiversity Action Through Awareness



This publication is presented to you with the intention of revealing greater insights to Sri Lanka's rich biodiversity. Our earnest wish is that you may gain an even greater appreciation of the value of our biological resources and understand the role you could play in conserving and protecting this rich biodiversity.

A Corporate Social Responsibility
Initiative by

